

Spring 2001

ARSENAL

A Magazine of Anarchist Strategy and Culture

#3

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ARSENAL

a magazine of anarchist
strategy and culture

Issue Three, Spring 2001

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Culture Wars

...this makes it very clear that the struggle for liberation is not only a cultural fact but also a factor of culture.

—Amilcar Cabral

Culturally, as with resources and organizing capabilities, we are out gunned. It's up to us to make our struggle exist culturally and in every sense. Capitalists and the state can manipulate the feelings of millions in a matter of days. Schools, prisons, and entertainment continually shape peoples' thinking and behavior. Anarchists both inhabit and confront this reality. So how can we a) sustain our lives as challenges to domination and b) produce within our inherited world the visions and imperatives of a new world?

The question of culture trips up the old strategies. Culture tends to get treated as either a by-product of a material base, as something made only by those who are particularly "gifted," or as some random, unfathomable monster. None of these perspectives, addressing culture as something separate from people's lives, will change anything.

How do we define, locate, and strengthen anarchist culture? We need to talk about anarchist culture because we see it as integral to our struggle for liberation. Protests and co-ops, peaceful or militant, will always fall short if they cannot create culture that makes revolution a necessity.

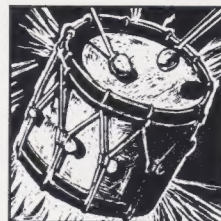
We're really talking about two types of culture—what we want now and what we want in a free society. Our culture, the now and the then, shares a common history, character, affinity, analysis,

awareness, rigor and passion. In the present we tend to position our culture against those that dominate the world. This fundamentally colors the culture we build as anarchists. Images and symbols of negativity and resistance are invaluable parts of anarchist culture. But anarchists must somehow look toward a culture that includes more than it excludes, that builds more than it destroys, that seeks in the end to cease being "anarchist" culture and becomes instead an essential characteristic of the many and varied cultures that exist throughout the world.

Anarchist culture is a fighting culture. We keep expressing ourselves and communicating about the world we seek to transform. We remember a lot and often make up what's missing as we go. Feeding this fighting culture means more than just sustaining our "cultural production" (news-papers, events, art). We have to ask questions of our culture that keep it connected to our lives: How does anarchism transform us? Does it challenge domination? Does it touch other cultures, grow, and relate to reality?

Anarchist culture is a utopian culture. We describe quite well what's wrong, but we also try to say what can be right. We try to state what it is that we're fighting for. As we struggle to transform our everyday lives, we draw the world to be made. The questions here are: How much of our lives is anarchist? Is our anarchism alive? Are we crossing cultures to provide and find ways to freedom?

Culture is most lively near the margins, at points of interaction. This condition should not be mistaken for an excuse to become



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marginalized and exist solely beyond the boundaries of the mainstream, in cul-de-sacs and insulated enclaves. We must cross borders. Even as we defend what we can claim as our own, we have to relate to non-anarchist allies in an anti-authoritarian way. Our work must model non-hierarchical relationships that build increased participation and territory.

Moving our reach outward means redrawing the maps. Icons, from our circle A to posters by the Federation of Iberian Anarchists, are markers rather than comprehensive and clear explanations of who we are and what we do and why. Our symbols give space to our scenes, territory to our movement and claim to a cultural and strategic anarchist future. The symbols of any culture are absolutely important but without much capacity to be critical. They are only the beginning of our cultural territory.

Simple slogans can be replicated, shouted and worn by anyone. Words, action, style and more can be co-opted and/or criminalized by our enemies. That can't stop us. The state, its agents and others will never adopt our revolutionary intent. They will never promote potent content that will reveal their own limits and contribute to the downfall of their agenda. Our words and actions have meaning and intention they can't imitate, profoundly different ways of seeing the world and living in it.

Anarchist vision integrates resistance culture and utopian culture, teaches us to make politics relevant, encourages participation and commitment, expresses the discipline and agency that leads to clear and unified action. Our

culture means more than what can be shattered or painted, printed or recorded. It is how we live and fight and how and what we hope to win.

Anarchist culture will be a meaningful force when our process and programs spell out our politics, ways & means, actions & ideas, a clear conception of the world and our place in it, our values, sense of right & wrong, how we respond to crisis, and the directions we take. Whether we concentrate on anarchist literature or sports leagues, debates or art, through it all a rich culture will express the how and what and why of our future. Fair play, competition, teamwork, training, commitment, leadership, winning, and discipline will prompt a different expectation when the terms are connected to "anarchist."

Business

Arsenal Magazine announces the Anarchist Artifact Project—a contest that aims to challenge what we think we know about anarchy and what we can describe as anarchist. Submissions on the theme the Anarchist Flag are due May 1, 2001. Basic information can be found on page 20. Complete details submission forms available from *Arsenal Magazine*. Write or email us.

In addition to promoting the development of contemporary anarchist artifacts, *Arsenal Magazine* will be sponsoring the Anarchist Debates at *Matches & Mayhem*. Topics will cover responding to fascism, anarchists and nationalism, and organization. Format will include participation from the “audience.” *Matches & Mayhem*, the *Midwest Anarchist Bookfair and Variety Show** will take place in Chicago May 25–27. (**M & M* includes a bookfair, talent show, debate series, film festival, propaganda gallery, an Anarchist Football Association league tournament, and the announcement of the Anarchist Artifacts Project prize winner.)

More Business

Arsenal now has a website. Letters, contributors links as well as the editorial and a featured article for each issue are posted at www.azone.org/arsenalmag.

Fighting Words in *Arsenal* #2 included a reprint of outdated points of unity for Anti-Racist Action. The most current version can be found at www.web.net/~ara.

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Wholesale copies direct from *Arsenal* are available for 50% off cover price in bundles of ten or more (i.e. 10 copies for \$20) with payment in advance. Ask us about consignment or other arrangements that might be possible.

Single (\$4) and bulk copies (price varies) are also available by mail from AK Press, Left Bank Distro, Tree of Knowledge and Lumberjack Distro. Contact these distributors or *Arsenal* for information on retail availability in your area.

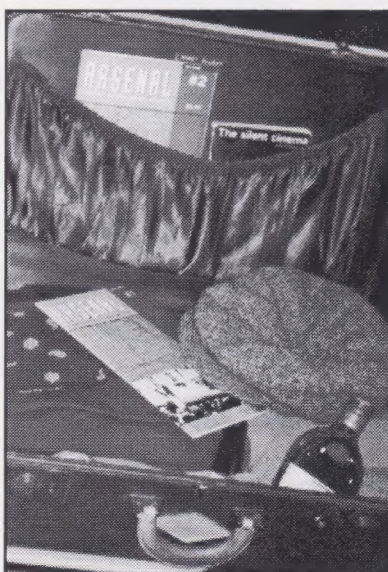


photo by Gelatina de Beouf

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by an
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member
of the
Iron
Column
during the
Spanish
Civil War



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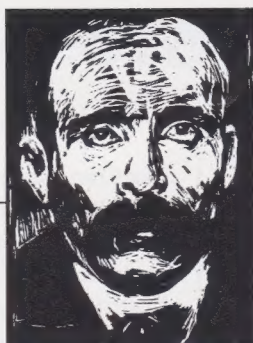
ASK A FALLEN COMRADE

Dear Sacco and Vanzetti,

My problem is everyone's always picking on me. I think it's because I'm 15 and I hate them. First my dad, he's always looking at my ass in these blue jeans I have that are ripped there and then yelling at me to put something else on. So I patched the holes in the jeans with a bumper sticker off his car that says Free Tibet. It was like a protest, because he's always oppressing me but then when some people ten million miles away get oppressed he's all sympathetic. When he saw the bumper sticker on my ass he yelled at me for "defacing" his Mercedes. Like he wasn't defacing it himself with his stupid hypocritical bumper stickers.

Now it's my almost ex-boyfriend. He got me involved with this political group I'm in called TeenAge Rage. We talk about anarchy and stuff and we do actions. I can't really tell you all about it because I took a blood oath. Anyway Bryan gets mad when I wear this Iron Maiden t-shirt. I cut the sleeves off. He says my tits fall out the sides of it now. He says everybody is always staring at my tits and I should do something about them.

I think him and my dad suck. I told them so but they don't listen to me. What should I do? Keep in mind that my dad buys my food and Bryan is the leader of TeenAge Rage which is the only good thing in my miserable pathetic life and the only reason I don't swallow this bottle of



Nicola Sacco



Bartolomeo Vanzetti

Valium I scored off my Sociology teacher this very instant.

Signed,
Big For My Britches

Dear Big:

Barto, I don't understand the question.

Nico, you have really got to get this English. It could be important.

I get some English. What I don't understand is, why does she ask us? We are humble people. You sold fish. I made shoes. She should be asking her problem to Galleani.

Well she has asked us and I think we should do all we can to help this comrade. She is poor and a radical. That's all we're guilty of ourselves.

We are also guilty of being Italian.

You are right. Also we are guilty of being immigrants.

Barto, why doesn't she get a job?

I don't know. Maybe that can be your advice to her, Nico.

Get a job! Support your fellow workers! Long live anarchy! But what good is my advice. My words are nothing. My pain is nothing. My life is nothing. Barto, you speak for us.

What do you mean, your life is nothing? The name Nicola Sacco will live in the hearts of

the people when that of Judge Thayer will be dispersed by time. You will be remembered when his laws, institutions, and his false god are but a dim remembering of a cursed past in which man was wolf to man.

You think?

Yes.

But really, I think it was not much, my life. In Italy I grew olives. I came here and made shoes. Then I got caught with a gun and sentenced to death. You know?

Not many men get to die for their ideals.

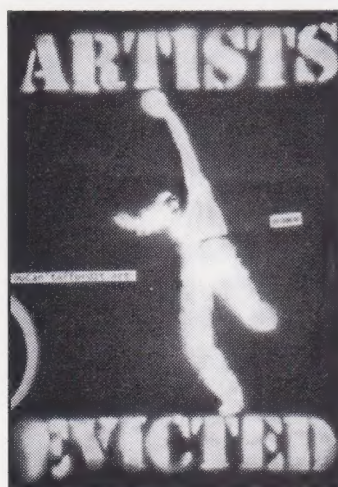
You have made me feel better. But what about our comrade?

Like all our anarchist comrades, she will have to content herself with living for her ideals, knowing that with her death they will live on, and that one day in the future liberty will triumph over tyranny. That is my advice.

I don't know. It seems like meantime she could form her own group or something. You know, make a schism off the other one. She could tell her father if he doesn't like what he's seeing, to stop looking there. You know? That is my advice.

Long Live Anarchy,
Sacco and Vanzetti

ANARCHISTS IN THE MIX



Signs of resistance in the Mission

by Natalia Shotwell

San Francisco's Mission District is a working class, multi-ethnic, poly-cultural enclave, one of a handful in North America. The end of the 1960's brought an influx of white artists from other parts of the city and country. Previous attempts by developers and city planners to orchestrate the direction of the Mission had always failed. Now, as gentrification is beginning to make inroads, and as more and more long-standing neighborhood institutions are forced out, the community—including artists and anarchists—is fighting back.

Resistance to the invasion is occurring in many different forms. Self-organizing has been taking place in the Mission's Latino community for over thirty years—since the first wave of displacement during the 1960's. Populist groups like the decade old People Organizing to Demand Economic and Environmental Power (PODER) and the recently arisen Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC) represent the broad-base of the neighborhood with a Mexican and Central American constituency. Their strategy is to preserve existing low-income housing stock, to provide local high-risk youth with educational skills and to help undocumented workers and immigrant families. Overtly

left-wing groups such as the Mission Agenda and the San Francisco Tenants Union—comprised of anarchists, Marxists, residential hotel occupants and the homeless—are working against the HUD's Federal Hope VI project as public housing complexes are being razed to the ground. These groups expose the practice of landlord arson—property owners burning down their tenements to collect insurance money.

The anarchist presence is more recent and, as is often the case because of unacknowledged racial and class entitlements, has grabbed the limelight as the media's darling. A campaign of poster art and graffiti has been deconstructing public imagery and re-appropriating public space by making wanted posters on real estate speculators and encouraging the destruction of private property.

A fault line of racial and cultural difference is made clear when anarchists enter the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC) and join the struggle against a surge of gentrification in the neighborhood. MAC works from a tradition of grassroots-oriented strategies, utilizing tactics like electoral politics, community speak-outs, door-to-door campaigning and civil disobedience. MAC has made a series of demands on the city's Planning Commission,

calling for a moratorium on commercial development and live-work lofts in the Mission, and the development of a neighborhood-based planning process.

An unacknowledged democratic centralism defines MAC. The paid organizers from the Latino non-profit housing groups view themselves as the coalition's leadership. They decide the weekly agenda and delegate the division of labor to the other members of the alliance. Tasks and decisions are characterized by an efficient top-down chain of command. Subcommittees take care of special chores, such as media and press releases, neighborhood outreach and petition gathering. The few left-leaning libertarians and anarchists in the group argue for a bottom-up, non-hierarchical approach on how the coalition should operate. They call for a process of transparency, that all decisions, large and small, should be made in front of a general assembly. The dialogue is complicated. Those who want authoritarian structure are primarily people of color and working class, and the anarchists calling for a decentralized decision-making process are mostly white and middle class.

The ranks of anarchists in the battle against gentrification have been thinned by the struggle against global capital. Local activism is witnessing a mass exodus of anarchists and other radicals to the more glamorous

street battles in D.C., Seattle, Philly, Los Angeles and Prague. The larger venues offer consolations that soften the long range and seemingly hopeless fight for a community—like the instant gratification and adrenaline that thousands of people marching against world renowned figureheads and massive assemblages of police and twenty whole minutes of mass media fame can provide.

In San Francisco and for other local struggles around the continent, the glorious battle for basic human rights overshadows bitter struggle for day-to-day survival—combined with repeated and forced relocation, the fight against gentrification has exhausted people. Many anarchists have already been pushed out of the Bay Area.

As decades of gentrification gives way to rapid corporatization—the top-down economic control of a community by out of town businesses—the neighborhood is ground zero in the real estate war. Like any war, the turmoil is taking a toll on lives—emotional, physical, economic and social. Constant violence is tearing down community, family, and home. A recent near-riot at a Planning Commission meeting at City Hall and the fifteen arrests from the civil-disobedience occupation of a dot-com company's offices spell out accelerating tensions. What makes the Mission District's struggle



Signs of resistance in the Mission

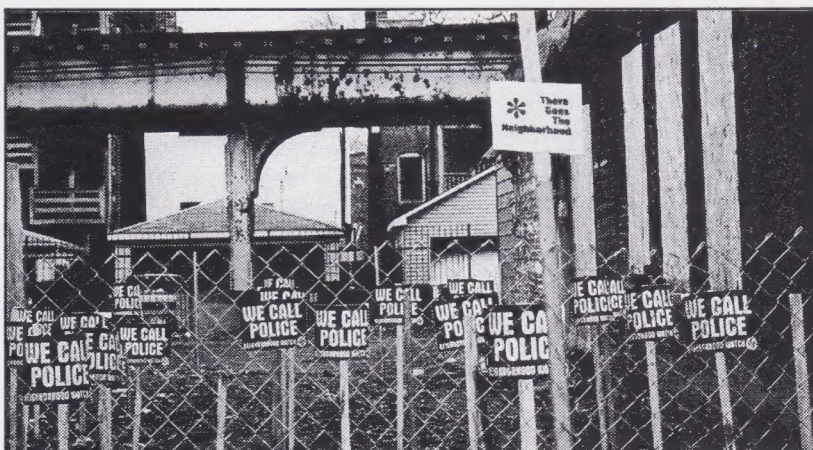
ANARCHISTS IN THE MIX

worth noting is the appearance of the true multi-racial coalition. Capital's ability to manufacture disharmony and schisms among the disenfranchised is being met with uncanny resistance from neighbors and workers. People want to work together. Direct action, instead of alienating the timid, has given courage to the oppressed. Consensus in action is transcending the fear and the distrust that white people and Latinos have suffered from when making an alliance. The racial divide is being bridged, for now at least, by the need to fight a common enemy.

Global capital has trickled down to the most localized sectors of where we work and live—it is affecting the housing we reside in and how much it costs, the public places and how we interact in them. Traditional social and racial territories are breaking down in the Mission.

Boundaries that have kept people apart have been superseded by de-territorialization, the fight to make a place for ourselves where there is none. One thing anarchists can bring to the table is history. The Mission is a Latino barrio and the legacy of Emiliano Zapata remains potent in the

neighborhood. The Magon brothers, the anarchists who helped Zapata devise some of his most important policies, are here as historical reminders. Whether the anarchists and the community groups are prepared for it or not, when the two are joined—working on massive building take-overs, creating art to maintain hope, and struggling with process—these challenges and more will surface and become a part of the organizing mix as anarchists get further involved.



There Goes the Neighborhood, installation in Wicker Park, Chicago
photo by V. Speedwell

WHAT GOOD ARE NATIONS?

ANARCHISM AND NATIONALISM

By Michael Staudenmaier

States and Nations

Anarchists have never been very good at distinguishing among various types of state-power. Too often, we get caught implying that, since all forms of hierarchy are bad, all states are the same in their badness. Too many anarchists use the words "police state" and "fascism" to describe the organization of state power in North America. Such characterizations are counter-productive in developing viable revolutionary strategies for anarchists, since knowing your enemy, accurately, is indispensable to defeating it.

Nonetheless, the flip side of the traditional anarchist moralistic naivete is a profound two-fold insight into the general, rather than particular, character of state power. First, most anarchists would agree that the state is essentially what German anarchist Gustav Landauer called it a century ago: "a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behavior." The state is hierarchy institutionalized as the only acceptable method of decision-making. Second, anarchists universally agree that it is possible and desirable to live our lives without the state. Disagreements emerge when we discuss the alternatives (syndicates, municipalities, assemblies, councils, etc.), but at a basic level, anarchists agree on these two points.

States are not my focus here, but this consensus is integral to understanding my perspective on nations and nationalism.

Anarchist opinion on nationalism has historically appeared quite varied: Michael Bakunin's nineteenth century pan-Slavism and description of patriotism as a "natural fact" contrast strongly with German anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker's anti-fascist denigration of the nation as "the artificial result of the struggle for political power, just as nationalism has never been anything but the political religion of the modern state." Today, anarchist skepticism about third world national liberation struggles co-exists uneasily with solidarity efforts in support of nationalist political prisoners in the US and elsewhere.

Despite these tensions, what unifies anarchist perspectives on nationalism, whether positive or negative, is a radical de-coupling of nation and state. Nations can exist without states, and—in principle, at least—nationalism can exist without statism. Even Rocker accepts this, although he uses the word "people" ("the natural result of social union, brought about by a certain similarity of external conditions of living, a common language, and special characteristics due to climate and geographic environment,") to describe what most people call a nation.



Rudolph Rocker

WHAT GOOD ARE NATIONS

Anarchists are nearly alone in understanding this de-coupling. Liberals believe a stateless society is impossible, so their vision of nations is inherently statist. Marxists, rather than being cynical, are opportunistic: nations are an important part of Marxist analysis only insofar as they play a strategic role in History, which normally amounts to fomenting bourgeois revolutions. Contemporary theorist Benedict Anderson, whose analysis of nationalism is widely influential in both camps, exemplifies the failure to de-couple: "The gage and emblem of this [national] freedom is the sovereign state."

By contrast, the anarchist criticism of state power as unnecessary and immoral allows a unified understanding of nations as a cultural formation more or less compatible with a stateless and free society. More or less, because the fact that nations can exist without states does not necessarily mean nations are desirable in themselves. On this critical issue, anarchists are firmly divided. There are of course innumerable anarchist answers to the question "what good are nations?" Two of these answers interest me here.

Classes and Cages

The "people, not nations" line embodied in Rocker's anti-nationalist populism is, I believe, wrong-headed. It attempts to salvage from nations the things most anarchists like, such as strong cultural identity and attachment to place, while jettisoning the bad parts: parochialism and class collaboration, for instance. Sadly, it is a practical reality that these elements are rarely divorced. Bakunin was right to claim that the "negative component" of

nationalism is "just as essential as the [positive component] and inseparable from it."

Since Rocker was a key progenitor of anarcho-syndicalism, it is perhaps not surprising that contemporary anarcho-syndicalists have maintained and developed the "people, not nations" position. Most visible in this regard have been sections of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), especially those grouped around the *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* (formerly *Libertarian Labor Review*). Combining the sort of economic reductionism that is often the hallmark of syndicalism with careful analysis of the harsh experiences of the Cuban revolution, LLR/ASR has published extensive and influential writings opposing nationalism and advocating working class internationalist revolution.

Anarcho-syndicalism views economic struggle as the primary form of revolutionary activity, and it emphasizes work-place struggles and class-based education. The IWW, while technically not an anarchist organization, is the strongest example of this strategy in North America today.

The color-blindness of "working people have no country" clearly derives from the Wobbly tradition of anti-racist internationalism, present from the first IWW convention in 1905, when it "did not make a bit of difference if he [the worker] is a Negro or a white man...an American or a foreigner." A century ago, when segregation was the most overwhelming manifestation of North American white supremacy, this was a revolutionary stand. But today, when liberal integrationism is central to white supremacy in the United

States, it may bear some connection to the largely white leadership and rank-and-file of one of the best-recruiting and most steadily growing segments of North American anarchism.

The recent series of articles in ASR on Noam Chomsky (issues #24–27) offers a prime example of the problems here. Chomsky is quoted relaying the analysis of one section of the Brazilian left, who argue that “their immediate task is ‘expanding the floor of the cage.’ They understand that they’re trapped inside a cage, but realize that protecting it when it’s under attack from even worse predators on the outside, and extending the limits of what the cage will allow, are both essential preliminaries to dismantling it. If they attack the cage directly when they’re so vulnerable, they’ll get murdered.”

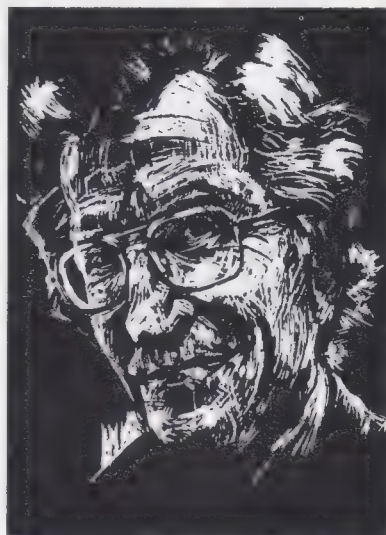
This metaphor caused a stir in the pages of ASR, with a half dozen anarcho-syndicalists weighing in on questions of reformism and revolution in anarchist strategy. The issues are too broad to discuss in any detail here, but one important point can be made. The cage under consideration is clearly the Brazilian nation-state, which is indeed subject to attacks from “even worse” entities like the IMF and the US State Department, and which in turn exercises a high level of violent repression against social movements. These characteristics create a fundamentally different situation than exists in the US.

Nonetheless, all participants in the ASR debate, with varying degrees of sophistication, argue that there is only one cage, “as large as the world,” capitalism, which imprisons all working

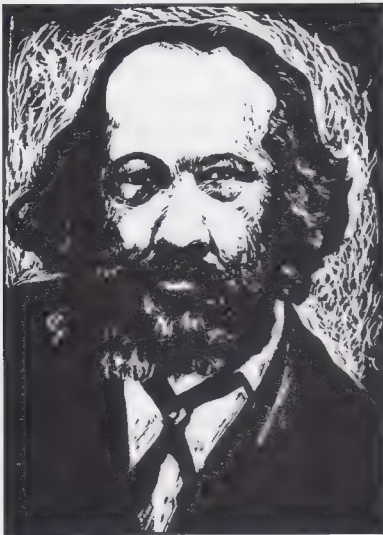
people equally. This claim exports syndicalist color-blindness to the global realm of national identity. The debate participants fail to acknowledge that racial and national identities, though far from identical, both create substantial divisions within global economic classes, divisions that must be worked through rather than ignored if anarchism is to succeed. Simultaneously, race and nation inspire meaningful cross-class alliances that are difficult to assimilate into a syndicalist world-view. By mistaking goals for reality, laudable working class internationalism becomes an unfortunate example of premature universalism.

The essential dynamic here is the prioritization of class over race as a site of struggle. Abolishing economic injustice, it is argued, will end white supremacy. The converse question, whether smashing capitalism first requires racial justice, is often quietly avoided. From this perspective, economics are pivotal, and race matters because it determines certain details of economic life—lower wages and worse working conditions for people of color, in Brazil or in New York. A more rounded analysis acknowledges the existence of social ills and social struggles, such as those based on race and nation, that both extend across class boundaries and create intra-class barriers.

I must be clear: anarcho-syndical-



Noam Chomsky



Michael Bakunin

ism offers one potential approach to the complex of issues presented by capitalism and white supremacy. I don't think its approach is correct, but I do think it is sincerely anti-racist. My concern is that, in prioritizing class over race, the "people, not nations" line underestimates the importance of cultural identity to

people's lives and to social struggles. This is a strategic dead-end for anarchist revolutionaries.

Prisoners of Nationalism?

Let's look at the other end of the spectrum. The Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF), a prisoner support organization with chapters across North America, is strikingly sympathetic to (some forms of) nationalism, especially to national liberation struggles of oppressed peoples in North America: blacks/New Afrikans, Puerto Ricans, and others. The ABCF's definition of "prisoner of war" is drawn from international law, and explicitly names those "struggling against colonial and alien domination and racist regimes." In fact, while the ABCF and its member groups are not shy about criticizing problems they perceive within anarchist struggle, they have generally failed to articulate any criticisms of the non-anarchist prisoners and movements they support. For this and other reasons (few of the prisoners they monetarily support are anarchists, approving references to Mao in ABCF literature,

etc.), some anarchists refuse to characterize the ABCF as anarchist, despite the name.

More troubling for my purposes is the failure and apparent unwillingness of the ABCF to articulate any theoretical analysis of its work, especially its relationship to nationalism. As a practical matter their support for specific prisoners provides clear evidence of their support for national liberation. It is hard to envision the editors of ASR, for example, devoting much effort to supporting imprisoned members of Puerto Rican armed struggle organizations. Further, the ABCF claims that its members "in some way or another are part of these very movements, part of the resistance that PP/POW's helped to build."

Almost all the prisoners supported by the ABCF are either people of color or whites whose politics are anchored in anti-imperialism and anti-racism. Since the ABCF deliberately takes leadership from the prisoners it supports, it makes sense that the Federation prioritizes these modes of struggle. At the same time, the project of the ABCF relies on notions of international law that largely developed out of struggles between various industrialized states. While the participation of successful national liberation movements did inject some radical notions into the discussion, international law remains an essentially bourgeois construct in intent and in effect. Together, these factors produce an analysis in which class issues are seen as a subsidiary concern, or as one manifestation of race relations.

The exception that proves the rule is the dispute over the status of Bill Dunne, a white man who considers himself to have been an

armed combatant in the class war and thus a POW. Advocates for nationalist POW's have generally considered him to be a political prisoner, reserving the term "prisoner of war" for armed combatants in national liberation struggles. Apart from reflecting the statist character of these struggles (POW's are exclusively those involved in struggles between presumptive nation-states), this stance also clearly indicates the prioritization of race over class as a site of struggle.

The ABCF currently identifies Bill Dunne as a prisoner of war, but it does not offer any public analysis of the dispute or of its rationale in calling him a POW. In fact, a stretch of the imagination is required to include Bill Dunne in the UN definition of "prisoner of war." While capitalism is certainly a form of "alien domination," this loophole would allow thousands of "social prisoners" (prisoners whose "criminal" actions were not motivated by conscious revolutionary political analysis) similarly to become class war POW's, something the ABCF steadfastly refuses to accept. A more common-sense solution is to jettison the UN definition and define POW as a self-designation available to any captured armed revolutionary. The ABCF's failure to move in this direction, and its unique approach to Bill Dunne, reflects a significant blind spot around issues of class struggle.

Where ASR offers the false dichotomy between people and nations, the ABCF upholds a similarly questionable opposition between "oppressor nationalism" (first world imperialist national feeling) and "nationalism of the oppressed" (that of third world nations, and also of Ireland, the

Basque region and some other developed areas). Without denying the reality of imperialism or the value of national identity in the third world, it is important to challenge the supposed differences between these two types of nationalism. In both cases, the social experience at a grassroots level is the same— cultural identity rooted in geography, language, and assorted historical intangibles, producing a broad-based love and prioritization of a community of communities. What distinguishes them are contingent factors like military strength and level of economic development, not their innately good or bad characters.

Much like the "people, not nations" position, "nationalism of the oppressed" attempts to separate the positive aspects of national identity and shield them from the undeniably negative ones. In particular, patriarchal power structures, intra-national racism, and the sizable class divisions within any nation are glossed over in the legitimate claim that certain nations are oppressed. In the ABCF, this translates to a failure to examine the politics underpinning either their own actions or those of the prisoners they support. In the end, race trumps class, limiting the revolutionary potential of the ABCF and the prisoner support strategy it represents.

Zapatistas and the rest of us

Most anarchists in North America today don't belong to the ABCF or the IWW. Most of us are more ad hoc in our analysis and in our practical work. We lend verbal and material support to political prisoners of various left tendencies, and at the same time harbor deep

WHAT GOOD ARE NATIONS

skepticism about the revolutionary claims of national liberation struggles. We recite rhetoric about class struggle (and break the occasional corporate window), but remain willing to work closely with anarchists and other radicals of all class backgrounds. We romanticize revolutionary violence and armed struggle while simultaneously advocating "mass work," community organizing, or whatever the popular term is for incremental, reformist work on issues like gentrification, police brutality, and so on.

This contradictory experience is nothing to be ashamed of. The world we live in is full of contradictions, not least of which are the oppositions of race and class, and it is unavoidable that our lives should reflect them. Further, such a mixture of positions corresponds well to the mixture of positive and negative elements in nations and nationalisms, or in internationalism and anti-nationalism. Insofar as our common experience denies the abstract distinctions offered by hard-line nationalists and anti-nationalists, most anarchists have our shit together more than we give ourselves credit for.

The archetype of this promising new anarchist response to nationalism is the high level of anarchist support for the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. The full name in English of the Zapatistas is the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Far from being an obsolete vestige of their origins in Marxism-Leninism, the nation is a key concept in the EZLN's struggle. In the face of globalization, it views an inclusive notion of national identity and difference (whether Mexican or otherwise) as an essential element in devel-

oping resistance. In an interview, Subcommandante Marcos says, "The concept of the nation is our form of opening our struggle, of expanding it, and this is basic to the Zapatistas. This history is what is shared by a worker in Mexico City or in the Port of Veracruz; an undocumented migrant crossing at Tijuana or an indigenous person in the Yucatan; a busboy in Cancun or a beautician in a hair salon in Mexico City." This is a form of class conscious national identity not so different from that of Puerto Rican independentistas or New Afrikan revolutionaries.

At the same time, what draws so many anarchists to the Zapatistas is their rejection of state power and their emphasis on constructing democratic power structures such as the autonomous municipalities. This autonomy has its parallel in the idea of a pluri-cultural nation that includes Mayans and mestizos (and others) without assimilating, tokenizing, or marginalizing. Zapatista notions of national identity offer a model of autonomy to Mexicans facing the dehumanization and isolation of neoliberalism, while protecting the autonomy of the myriad communities that make up the nation.

Is this an anti-statist nationalism? Perhaps. It still contains many of the dangers of nationalism, especially a susceptibility to reformist progress on questions of Mexican national sovereignty and domestic policy. This means the Zapatistas remain potentially recuperable by both the newly victorious faction of the Mexican neoliberal elite and by the broader global capitalist system. That the EZLN has so far resisted this recuperation is testimony both to the

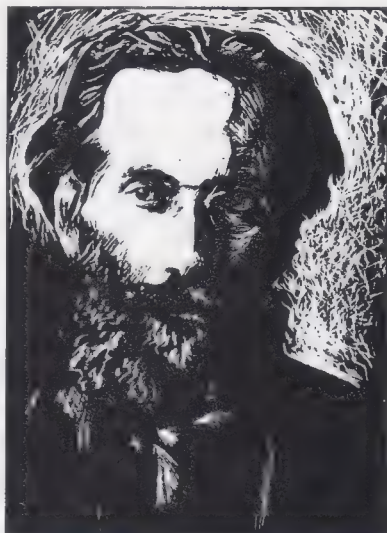
value of autonomist and implicitly anti-statist organizing and to the positive elements of any national struggle—love of community and a commitment to cultural variety in the face of globalizing homogenization.

Closer to home, at a recent meeting in Detroit aimed at forming a Midwest Anarchist Alliance, discussion turned to issues of nationalism and anti-nationalism. Several participants suggested that anti-nationalism and anti-imperialism were equally fundamental aspects of anarchism. Others, mostly people of color, objected that this position would be hard-pressed to produce alliances with anti-authoritarian tendencies within national liberation struggles, which they described as anarcho-nationalist. This argument is a variation on “nationalism of the oppressed,” and depends upon an awkward version of solidarity between whites and communities of color. We need to build our alliances on foundations of critical respect rather than avoidance of potential differences. The problematic mix of positive and negative elements in any national identity should make anarchists skeptical of nationalism. Constructive critical engagement with national identity should not make us nationalists.

The alternative is a different sort of solidarity. Anarchists can participate in and/or lend support to anti-colonial struggles in a principled and critical way. Chiapas is again exemplary in several ways. Anarchists (Mexican, North American, and world-wide) have consistently been among the most committed and hard-working supporters of the Zapatistas, both in Chiapas and elsewhere. Rather than become nationalists,

most anarchist Zapatista supporters have remained vocal critics of nationalism, whether of the EZLN or of other factions in the Zapatista solidarity movement. To its credit, the EZLN has welcomed and encouraged this sort of solidarity, demonstrating again how innovative its nationalism is.

Anarchists need to sift carefully through our practice and our theory regarding nationalism, discerning the parts of each that make sense in the current context, and those that don't. We can begin by recognizing that nations are real, and that they are here to stay, but that they are also quite malleable, as the Zapatistas have shown. (On the other side, dangerous movements, like “third positionists” and so-called “national anarchists” demonstrate the potential for combining national liberation with concepts of racial and sexual purity more often found in fascist rhetoric.) Anarchists must become involved in a critical way in what Marcos calls the “reconstruction” of the nation, which can only happen if we avoid the twin pitfalls of knee-jerk anti-nationalism and uncritical acquiescence to national liberation. By balancing the competing claims of race and class, we can develop a new anarchist understanding of nations and nationalism. If we fail, the struggle for a meaningful anarchist revolutionary strategy in the coming decades will be futile.



Gustav Landauer

WHOSE 'NET? OUR 'NET! THE TAO OF ANARCHISM

Review the anarchist organization

by Derek Kenney

Part of the increased visibility, effectiveness and growth of the world's anarchist community in recent years has been due to our ability to understand and master information technologies. Computers connect a global anarchist community. By knowing one another we are more effective. We learn, teach, and fight together. Last year's mass mobilizations against the IMF, World Bank, and WTO wouldn't have happened on the same scale if anarchists hadn't learned to use and control computer technology and build a space for ourselves on the internet. Because of this work more collectives and individuals are creating alternative institutions, real and virtual.

TAO (The Anarchist Organization) Communications has furthered anarchism, self-determination and our claim to cyberspace through computer technologies. TAO is organized as a federation of collectives that creates networks in order to support the spread of information and serve the specific interests of organized anarchists. As a federation, TAO is founded on a set of beliefs that strive for an anti-authoritarian society.

TAO projects include the *A-infos* email list, web hosting multiple anarchist sites (Direct Action Media Network, Grassroots Media Alliance, North East Zapatista Solidarity Network, and Root Media, to name just a few), discussion lists and forums, an anarchist activist calendar of events, security training, and more. Best known of all of these efforts is *A-infos* email list. This list is probably the most expansive news service connecting anarchists globally. It is used by community and micro power radio show, zines, papers, magazines, organizing centers and infoshops, activists and educators.

The level of technical detail that is put into TAO projects is impressive. *A-infos* e-mails to thousands of recipients worldwide and processes hundreds of posts. There are multiple language versions of postings and articles, and the list incorporates a Pretty Good Privacy (PGP) encryption scheme for security.

The operating system that the various mail and web servers run off of is a freeware operating system called Linux. This is a really nice technology choice. Linux is free and was developed by a community of volunteer programmers worldwide. The intent behind the development of Linux was to create an operating system that was widely available to users for free, would be exceptional in its offerings, and challenged the position of market driven operating systems like Windows. Linux is sold all over the place, but it is just a packaged version that comes with an installer and some components. You don't need it. Go to www.linux.org. This system and how it came to exist is consistent with TAO's objective to

...operate against capital or market-regulated forms of political, economic and cultural organization, and towards socially just, ecologically sound, international liberation.

Some of the principle beliefs listed by the TAO federation are

- demand for freedom as expressed through community based direct democracy
- the right to self determined existence without infringing on other's rights
- information being available for free

Credit has to be given to TAO for how much work is put into developing as well as maintaining all of these components of this information infrastructure. Development, coordination, maintenance, and security are really involved and necessary tasks for any serious anarchist organization. TAO carefully considers and ably tackles all of these tasks.

What I like even more than their ability to keep it all together is how the different tasks are organized as sub-collectives. The lists are managed by a lists sub-collective. The web, list and email servers are managed by the admin sub-collective. Other collective groups deal with security, dns server, and a main tao.org collective. Involvement in these different collectives is determined by interest in the particular functions of each working group, amount of time available to contribute, and skill.

Each of the working groups listed on TAO invite people to apply and work within a sub-collective. This is significant. Tech work is mostly a specialized skill that requires knowledge, has marketability, and in some situations creates a technical elite (even among radicals working together). Offering involvement and education on technical projects challenges this dynamic.

TAO's method of distributing information to a mass of anarchists and challenging the information blockade is metaphorically similar to the tao practice of wu wei. This is the practice of achieving maximum action through minimal action. Like with the tao, positive goes with the negative. TAO Communications states their beliefs and lists their demands in a manner that is admirable for its clarity.

However, they do not offer a plan or the means of working toward these demands. Full employment, free and decent housing, freedom for political prisoners, end to war, etc. are demands that many of us, in general, support. TAO's actual work is very specific, and specifically limited. The work of



accomplishing the demands is presumably left to the anarchists who utilize TAO's "networks in order to defend and expand public space and the right to self-determination."

I'm obviously pretty enthusiastic about the work TAO does. In most cases I would say their work is consistent with their stated beliefs. Working in the industry, I can tell you that the thoroughness and magnitude of TAO's work would easily land most of them a cushy job in the dot.com business world. The TAO-ists opt instead for maintaining a radical infrastructure that furthers anarchism.

Through topic discussion lists and collecting and transmitting news that matters to us, anarchism is more accessible, better understood, more active, and has the potential for even more. Computer technologies are also part of the establishment that we as anarchists try to undermine. Still, computers and networks are a neutral technology. While they are manufactured in the pursuit of capital, efforts like TAO help turn these tools into effective methods of fighting for a just and liberated society.

The TAO site is at www.tao.ca.



ANARCHIST ARTIFACTS PROJECT

**A call for
entries**

Design and Fabricate the Anarchist Flag

Guidelines

- One entry per anarchist/collective.
- Entries must be functional (no photos or diagrams) and include instructions for display.
- Artifacts must be between 12"x18" and 12'x18' (however the shape does not have to be a rectangle).
- Entries open to existing artifacts (flags do not have to be created specifically for this contest).
- Include anarchist's statement and biography.
- Flags should be postmarked by May 1, 2001 and sent to Arsenal

Procedures

A panel will evaluate the submissions and award prizes entries will displayed during Matches & Mayhem. Prizes (tba) will be awarded during Matches & Mayhem. For complete details and entry forms write to Arsenal Magazine or check Arsenal's website.

Arsenal Magazine

1573 N. Milwaukee #420 Chicago IL 60622

www.azone.org/arsenalmag

OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE

TOWARD AN ANARCHIST POLITICS

by Cindy Milstein

During this past fall's televised presidential debates, a curious ad appeared. A semi-scruffy young musician is shown yelling at a boy on a bicycle, "You are all sheep for the capitalist wolves." Next, flashing ominously across the screen, is the tag line: "This guy votes. Shouldn't you?"

Sadly, what comes across in the ad is this: the danger posed by anti-capitalists is that they will vote. Now one could say that this image is a product of a medium that caricatures and simplifies, and there is much truth to that. Nevertheless, it also illustrates a weakness on our part as antiauthoritarian leftists in this new international movement.

An anticapitalist stance was the obvious radical message at direct actions targeting global financial institutions from N30 onward — especially in contrast to the reformist anticorporatism of many activists. The inspiring "Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc" banner held high by black bloc participants during April's World Bank/IMF protests in D.C. cemented the link between anarchism and a rejection of the market economy. By the time Prague rolled around, demonstrators were routinely labeled anticapitalists by mainstream media across the globe. This is a credit to the anarchists who initiated and organized this movement from the first, and a real triumph that should neither be dismissed nor dropped from our "program."

Yet as communists, socialists, and electorally oriented Greens move in to capture the movement's momentum, anarchists must push even harder to make our critique of domination perse as central as our condemnation of capitalism. Both in order to dismantle an exploitative economic system and to build a free society, a political vision is needed that doesn't rely on statist means; that has historically been anarchism's unique contribution. Minimally, a "Revolutionary Anti-Statist Bloc" could have served as a foil to the exclusionary politics of this past summer's Republican and Democratic conventions. But more important, anarchists must face the difficult task of offering an alternative to the state we so rightly abhor.

For even if we manage to make anti-statism as prominent a media darling as anticapitalism, and thus create an equally public debate about the role of the state as we have over that of international finance bodies, we need to be able to articulate a vision of what would replace it. Such a vision is necessary if we are ever to catalyze a desire on the part of more than a small subculture for social transformation. Milosevic fell because many in Yugoslavia saw representative democracy as such a beacon. We also need to hold out an ideal for thousands and ultimately millions of people to come to, but a far more expansive and freeing one: self-government, or direct democracy.

Unfortunately, we have often

ignored our political lives, and that of the larger society in general. Why? The short answer is that present-day anarchists have largely failed to theorize the distinction between states and governments, and from there, distinctions between types of governments. Any institutionalized system of making social decisions has been seen as authoritarian. And so most anarchists turn a blind eye to the very question of what a politics outside statecraft would look like. How would we organize public policy making in such a fashion as to promote mutual aid, decentralization, equality, and all those other principles we so value? If we fail to address this question, even in the most preliminary of ways, we not only fail to convince people who aren't like us to struggle by our side; we also leave the door open for all sorts of authoritarian alternatives.

This brings us back to the here and now of this movement. The first step might be to gather with like-minded others in affinity groups, federations, and such, to begin to detail what we mean by both antistatism and direct democracy. This could then be explicitly expressed to a wider and wider public—whether creatively incorporated into our global and local actions, or spelled out in manifestos and essays. As the more authoritarian anticapitalists converge on this anarchist-inspired movement, we need to up the ante of what we are demanding: a world without masters, neither capitalism nor the state.

REVOLUTIONARY

a true story in the making

by sistern Mat
thann KASHA!

DEDICATED TO THE BLACK BLOC
those sweet hard assed
I love REVOLUTIONARIES

The
Revolution
WILL BE
PREDICTABLE
!!!

fuck insipid
assimilation

the cops
are smashing
heads and I
cant smash one
corporate
window?!

But they could use a
little creativity in the
WARDROBE DEPARTMENT

HOW ABOUT Wig Bloc?

oh no
Miss cop
you are NOT
moving this
line

ooh, not
with THAT
hairdo he
wont!

oh, you
think
you're
the big
wig, Mr
Awful
sir!

at least he could
get some feathers
for that
Booring hat

100%
vegan
fake
feathers

Guaranteed to be even More Fun than Wig Stock!

notice mysterious revolutionary backlighting.

or... *The Sisters of Imminent Revolution?*
(aka the nun bloc)

you are one of
god's children
officer

but he forbids
your use
of that
night stick

can't talk
dear police
I must go
liberate goods
for the
orphanage!

who've
we got
booked?
well, there's
Miss Clavel,
Mother Theresa,
Hildegard Von
Bingen, sister
Jane Doe, sister
Maria...

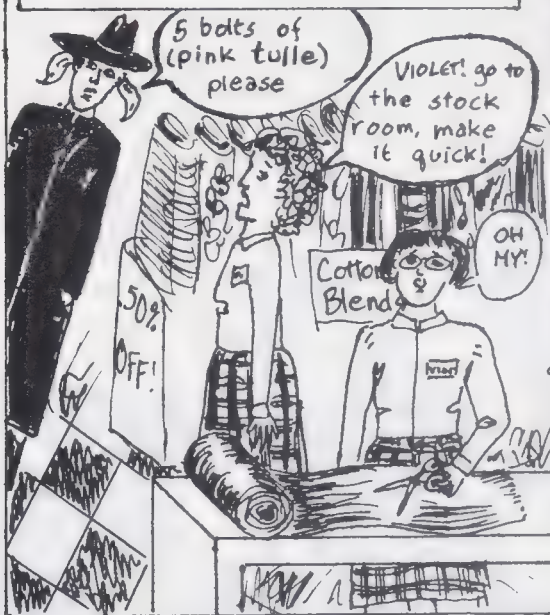
BUT...

IF YOU WANT TO BE
WHERE IT'S GOING ON
Next A 20,
J12 or Q53
YOU HAD BETTER
GET SERIOUS
ABOUT JOINING
THE MOST
UP AND COMING
BRIGADE...

SARGE

ooooh,
the
suspense!

The preparations will be tricky...



... and grueling



The training will be long and involved, beginning months before the convergence.

now keep those toes pointed

and sing, don't shout, "here comes the revolution"

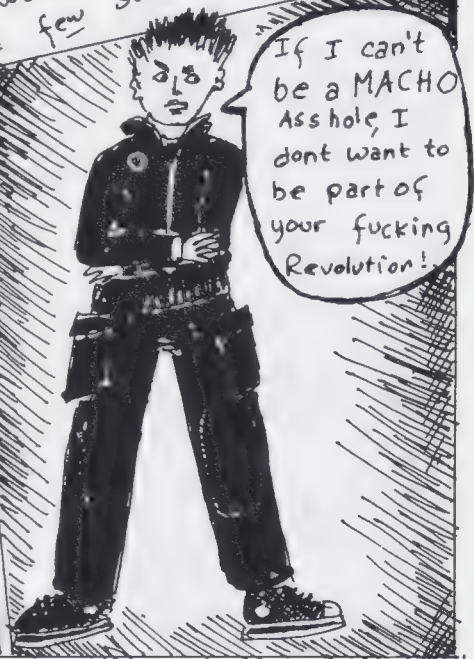
where's my soprano?



When the
Pink Tutu Bloc
 will - turn the tides of opression....



Well, Maybe there will be
 a few sourpuss dissenters
 poo-poo heads

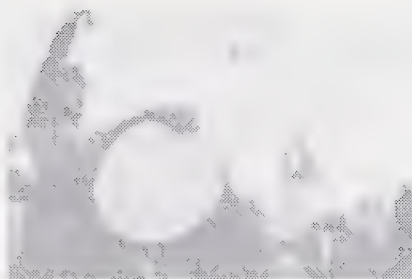


DONT BE A STICK IN THE MUD OF OUTDATED TACTICS,
 FORM OR JOIN A PINK TUTU A.G. IN YOUR TOWN.
 (this part is not just a joke stay tuned)

END



FROM HERE TO THE FREE STATE BUILDING THE BRIDGE IN MINNEAPOLIS



1862

Year of the Dakota uprising; 800 Natives imprisoned that winter; 38 hung.

1883

Minnehaha Park is established to preserve and integrate the existing oak habitats that grew within the city's limits; first state park in the country.

1888

Horace Cleveland, designer of the Minneapolis Park system, gives a public address; names Minnehaha Falls area a "most significant Native American landscape."

1996

February — the Park and River Alliance forms to fight the proposed reroute of Hwy 55 through a corridor of Minnehaha Park, the falls, the coldwater spring, and the oak savannah. October 24 — the Park and River Alliance files a lawsuit against the Park Board and MnDOT.

1997

January — the Stop the Reroute Coalition forms.

*By Austin Night, Emily Night
and David Night*

The movement to stop the reroute of Highway 55 and the creation of the Minnehaha Free State in Minneapolis yielded important critical and organizational lessons for activists everywhere.

Minneapolis enjoys a fine history of radical politics spanning decades and including a strong co-op movement, anti-gentrification work, union organizing, peace activism, and militant opposition to racists and the anti-choice movement. A significant strain of this activism over the last 15 years has been anarchist. Minneapolis was part of the rise and fall of the Love & Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, Backroom Anarchist Bookstore, the Revolutionary Anarchist Bowling League, Tornado Warning, Agitator Index Collective, Twin Cities Anarchist Federation, and the Emma Goldman Community Center. Among the organized anarchist projects, only back-from-the-dead *Profane Existence* and the Arise! Bookstore are still going strong.

The considerable decline of what was arguably one of

the most dynamic and influential anarchist scenes on the continent can't be blamed on any single factor. Many people in the ranks moved west to the Bay Area and east to New York City by 1994. Conflicts between "too punk" and "not punk enough" were draining and isolationist. Many anarchist organizers began to involve themselves in struggles outside the anarchist box, creating and contributing to movements including anti-police brutality, sweatshop labor, and threats to First Nations sovereignty. Those who committed to this work are finding that operating outside of a strictly anarchist agenda can provide meaningful work and important education. Our role is to support and learn, not rescue; we learn what real communities are facing and find solutions that mean something right now, not in some mythic future or as a sign-holding rank in a massive mobilization against something far away. It is about real lives, next door, across the street, around the corner.

Minnehaha

With the emergence of this new focus, anarchist organizers kept in touch with issues important to the people in their neighborhoods. When

they started hearing about plans to reroute a highway, they knew that important connections were to be made here. What followed was a movement influenced by the anarchist community in Minneapolis, but one with its own significant history which was brought to bear in its August 1998–December 1999 existence.

State transportation planners first envisioned the reroute of state trunk highway 55 in the 1950s. The reroute corridor selected by the Minneapolis Department of Transportation (MnDoT) for the shortened, rerouted leg of highway 55 would move the road less than one block east of the existing corridor, and would put the highway through Minnehaha Park, the very first state park in the U.S.; into the living rooms of seven families; on top of the last undeveloped section of wilderness in Minneapolis; over Mississippi River bluffs; through the last section of burr oak savannah in the area; and directly over the source of Coldwater Spring, a 9,000 year old pure water spring.

Residents of this working class section of town had long viewed this area as precious to their neighborhood and lives. People from all over came here to escape the city, walk their dogs, wildcraft herbs, as well as pray and hold ceremonies. The plan to reroute the road was hardly popular with any of these groups. For as long as MnDoT tried to shove their plan down the throats

of the people they encountered significant opposition.

Over decades in the courts and in the legislature, MnDoT moved forward with their plan, gaining eminent domain over parkland, wilderness and homes. By the late 1990s, with hundreds of millions of federal transportation dollars on the line, MnDoT decided the time had come to push the reroute project the last two miles to completion through the most contested area of the corridor.

Thirty-plus neighborhood organizations, businesses, environmental groups and faith-based communities formed a coalition to Stop the ReRoute. In 1998, the Minneapolis-based Big Woods Earth First! joined the Stop the ReRoute movement, bringing veterans of anarchist groups out of the “fringe” and into the neighborhood. These Earth First!ers educated themselves on the issues, joined the weekly Stop the ReRoute meetings, and developed relationships with the old-timers of the struggle. The unlikely integration of EF!ers into this coalition was aided by the profound relationship between several of the EF!ers and a woman whose family home of 43 years stood directly in the path of destruction. In May of 1998, Carol Kratz invited the Big Woods folks to set up an info table and tent in her yard on Riverview Road. Her home, which she shared with her terminally ill husband, Al, was the last inhabited home

1998

February — Carol Kratz receives condemnation papers from MnDoT.

May 28 — the Park and River Alliance lawsuit is thrown out in court because the statute of limitations ran out; public official Linda Strapp had previously said “we’ll take your house whether you stop the road with the lawsuit or not.”

June — Camp Two Pines is established on the 5300 block of Riverview Road, consisting of an information table and a large canvas tent in the front yard of Carol and Al Kratz.

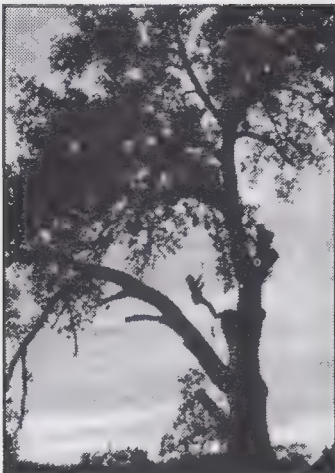
August 10 — demolition slated for 3 of 7 remaining houses on Riverview Road; in the early morning these 3 houses are occupied by Big Woods Earth First!; AIM and the MMDC join the occupation over the next few weeks to form the longest urban occupation in the country’s history.

August 21 — After months of pressure and stress, Carol signs away her home of 43 years on Riverview Road.

August 28 — Critical Mass rides from downtown Minneapolis to the camp in a show of solidarity.

September 8 — 20 foot banner hung by Spiderman from crane on Hwy 55

September 16 — work crews attempt to disconnect gas lines in one of the houses; 2 campers lock to



Climoer at Minnehaha

the machines and hell
work for the day, the 2 are
arrested

September 27—the first
annual Pow-Wow of Camp
Two Pines takes place at
the south end of the block

October 10-12—Big Woods
Earth First! hosts the
Midwest regional Earth
First! rendezvous on site

October 14—rally of 200+
held at the state capitol in
St. Paul; 60+ law enforce-
ment officers take advan-
tage of the near-empty
camp and come to discon-
nect utilities in the houses;
the rally is alerted and
the camp is full again; 16
arrested trying to stop the
workers.

October 20—4 campers
begin a hunger strike,
until the road project is
cancelled.

October 27—campers
attempt to hang banner off
a parking ramp across from
City Hall to draw attention
to the hunger strike.

November 7—a Treaty
Unity Ride takes place.

on this block of seven houses claimed by MnDoT, and they weren't willing to give it up without a fight.

Bulldozers were due on Riverview Road on August 10, 1998. Ready on that day were people with the skills and knowledge and a deep community base prepared to engage in direct action resistance. By dawn three of the seven houses were secured; a tripod was erected next to one residence, an activist lay attached to an underground lockbox in another yard, and the third had been occupied and barricaded by three women.

A Free State

As the sun rose, these resisters expected to be a minor obstacle to the bulldozers, delaying work for a couple of hours. But the day ended without incident and with the houses still standing. So did the next day, and the next, and the next. At this time, all of the hard work and relationships that had been built within different communities helped to build one of the most dynamic, inspiring and long-lasting urban occupations in recent history. The Minnehaha Free State was born into a broad community united to stop the road.

Earth First!, the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community (MMDC), and the American Indian Movement (AIM) were among the block's first new residents. Tipis, a sacred fire, and a sweatlodge were set up directly in the way of the

road. AIM—established in Minneapolis in 1968—has maintained the struggle for Indigenous political, cultural, and spiritual integrity and sovereignty since its birth. The MMDC was very familiar with this struggle, but new to direct action. The Mendota Community's ancestors lived at the convergence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, just south of the proposed reroute. They brought their stories and histories to the Free State and explained how the four burr oak trees just south of Riverview Road had been used as markers of a sacred place and as burial scaffolds. Their early and sustained commitment to the campaign has been of pivotal importance in the struggle. The relationship between the Mendota/AIM community members and the Earth First!/anarchist contingent at the encampment was one of constant education, many disagreements, mutual aid, and profound inspiration.

The Free State maintained its presence on Riverview Road for over four months. We were active participants and residents. There was a communal kitchen, communal living spaces, a community café, weekly corn roasts, weekly open-mic events and two pow-wows on site. Several schools sent classes on field trips to visit the encampment. The outside community donated food, blankets, clothes, money, and whatever else we needed. We held meetings at

least once a day in the beginning. All decisions about the camp or next moves in the campaign were made using consensus process. We had no central committee, no permanently designated "leaders" or "spokespeople," and we lived well together.

People created the world they wanted to live in and lived in the world they wanted to create. We worked hard every day, not just with direct action plans or cooking, but with the nuts-and-bolts of how to relate to each other and to the Free State. It was a time of inspiring possibility and actualization of many of our greatest dreams of community resistance.

After four months, the camp was finally raided and we were evicted from the houses that we had made into homes. Dubbed Operation Coldsnap, the December 20, 1998 raid was the largest police action ever in the state of Minnesota. Moving in at 4am, it took barely three hours for 800+ law enforcement officers to

remove 38 people, using tear-gas, pepper spray and batons to force resisters to comply. Demolition crews arrived while we were in jail, and seven houses were crushed and burned in six hours that Sunday morning. The governor appeared to commend the troops on their good work, and to warm his hands on the ruins of our lives.

Creative resistance is powerful. We would not let go of this fight easily, and by dawn of December 24, 1998, just four days after the raid, the Free State was reborn. Approximately 200 feet south of Riverview Road, just behind a sheltering grove of oak and sumac, this reincarnation of the resistance lasted another dramatic year, until it, too, was finally raided on December 11, 1999. On that day, MnDoT contractors, under the protection of hundreds of state troopers, chainsawed and bulldozed all the remaining trees in the reroute corridor—as well as our community, once again.



Community garden

with folks riding on horse-back from Birch Coulee Camp to the occupation

November 26—first annual Thanksgiving Day potluck feast hosted at the camp.

December 9—Carol and Al Kratz are forced out of their home by MnDoT and relocated half a mile away.

December 10—In anticipation of a raid, the camp hosts "Community Support Day"; no raid.

December 12—first in a series of yearly group photos at the site.

December 20—4 am: in the largest police action in the state of Minnesota, 802 LED's raid the camp, heating, tear gassing, and pepper spraying occupants; tiple, sacred drums, the sacred fire, the sweat lodge, and homes are destroyed within 6 hours; 38 arrested.

December 23—a new occupation begins at the Four Sacred Trees, just south of the previous encampment

December 28—three MPD officers that planned the "Operation Coldsnap" receive awards of merit from the city.

1999

Stop the Reroute wins "Resister of the Year" award from Refuse and Resist.

January 15—speakout about the raid at Walker Community Church.

January 19—court for

those arrested in the raid; all but 7 people's charges dismissed.

February 10—6 month anniversary of the occupation, dubbed "Minnehaha Free State."

February 23—rally at the state capitol in St. Paul.

April 21—rally at City Hall

July (last week of)—destruction of trees begins north of the camp;

27 occupy Hwy 55 and are arrested; 6 campers occupy a cottonwood slated for death.

August 1-6—International Black and Green conference held at the Free State.

August 6—lockdown at the state capitol building; 8 arrested.

August 8—second annual Pow-Wow held on site.

August 10—one year anniversary and celebration.

August 24—charges from the December 20 raid dismissed for the last two defendants.

September 25—Stop the Land Grab March from south Hwy 55 to north Hwy 55 with Northside Neighbors for Justice (whose homes are also threatened by the highway).

September 26—workers begin to cut away at branches of cottonwood; 4 occupants remain.

September 27—early

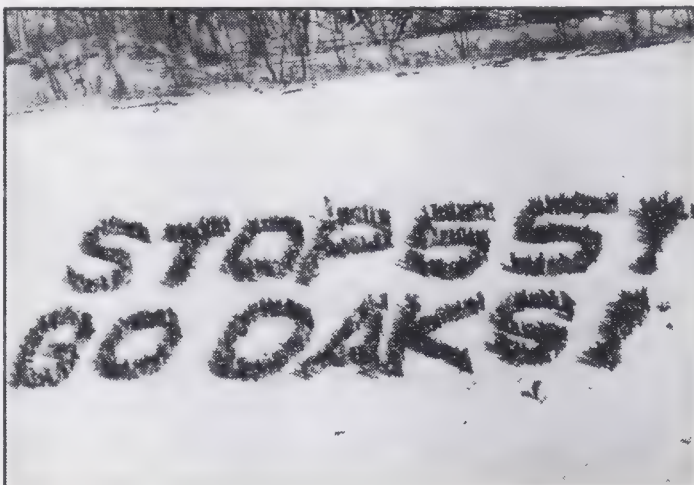
Diagnosis

The Minnehaha Free State was never an "anarchist" project. There were a few anarchist organizers who promoted full participation, and discussion flowed by encouraging a consensus model. These elements were never argued on pure principle, but rather were integrated and became a crucial part of the character of the Free State. We argued that these methods would strengthen the movement and defend the Sacred Sites and homes slated for demolition because the decentralized decision-making would empower folks and inspire full commitment and mobilization. The Free State became an opportunity to experience something rare—anarchy in action; we were, after all, creating something different than politics as usual—and reality as usual—in America.

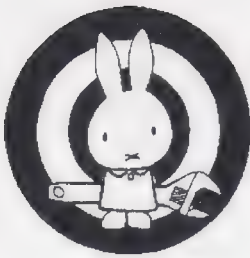
Many conflicts and problems at the Free State were a reflection of the diversity of the coalition. Coming together into a new community of

people takes some time for adjusting. There were, at times, problems at the Free State that involved inconsiderate, disrespectful, and egotistical behavior, and often this was coming from the young, white, radical activists. Egos challenged efficiency and fairness. In a community, whether created for a campaign or as part of a household, taking responsibility for a fair share of glamorous maintenance and cleaning is essential for everyone, regardless of how skilled one is at facilitating meetings or operating equipment or rallying the troops. Housekeeping must also be extended to attitudes. When unity is essential and morale is critical, squandering precious time and energy to repair damage caused by egos being unfair, selfish, and unprincipled compromises the larger community and the resistance as a whole. There is no room for being intentionally controversial or bad-ass in this movement.

As a result of these behaviors, relationships between



Group photo



the anti-authoritarians and the Native folks were tested and occasionally strained. Some activists would plan and execute actions that failed to take into account the safety and priorities of their larger community. Requests for respectful process and safety considerations from the Native folks were sometimes met with indifference or even contempt.

There was clearly not enough time and work going on within the community to ensure that our struggle would be an anti-oppressive struggle on all fronts. Political statements, processes, accountability, and consequences need to be as clear as possible from the beginning. The history of oppression, which we all inherit, is centuries deep. It is required that we, here and now, make a real commitment to an anti-racist and anti-imperialist movement. We need to remember that there is no elitist vanguard. We are in this mess together and we have to work for change with some real humility.

Prognosis

Struggles continue in Minneapolis. Stop the

ReRoute is now called Preserve Camp Coldwater Coalition and they still meet every Monday night. Most of the anarchists have moved on from this. We are still learning and changing. If we fail to continually challenge ourselves to make connections with those who may differ in some ways from ourselves, we are losing (or never making) potential allies and shortchanging our campaigns. The Free State was a coalition. It still is; the bridges we made there still remain, and we must challenge ourselves to cross them every now and then.

The current mass direct action and organizing campaign in Minneapolis is focused on biotechnology. Some issues, however, haven't changed. The struggle against egotism and the ignorance of privilege that weakened our work at the Free State also demand our creative efforts now.

Anarchists and other radicals are headed towards the goal that, because of the Free State, we can now see—community autonomy. This is a vision we can share with many people who enter into struggle against the state. But we are also all of us in a very dangerous position. We will be under increased attack as a result of our occasional stabs at global capitalism and corresponding media attention. If we do not become rooted and if roots do not run deep in the communities where we live, we are easily isolated and effectively neutral-

morning, tripod is set up at base of cottonwood, in the middle of Hwy 55 with 2 locked to it; 16 arrested; ELF slash conveyor belts and damage machinery.

September 29—lockdown at Transportation building in St. Paul; 13 arrested.

September 30—13 trees are cut down.

October 2—more damage to equipment by the ELF.

October 5—more resistance at the cottonwood; 5 arrested. Nettle is last occupant remaining; she is denied food and water provisions.

October 8—Tree Frog climbs telephone pole across highway from cottonwood in attempt to slingshot provisions to Nettle; in following scurry, 5 arrested trying to obtain badge numbers; later that night, Nettle's safety net is cut by workers and she comes down; 7 total arrests and the cottonwood is killed.

From this time on, there is constant land destruction and killing of trees from the creek to the camp.

October 15—one camper locks to Hydro-Ax that came to cut the trees; he and his support person arrested.

November 16—T-Rex occupies a tree on Riverview Road and is forced to come down; he is ticketed while lying in the ambulance; his support person and one other are arrested.

November 17— Captain Kevin Kittridge of the state patrol and Lt. Bud Emerson of the MPD visit camp to discuss the upcoming raid; invited to smoke a truth pipe, Kittridge partakes but Emerson (who was in charge of the first raid) declines.

December 9— eviction notices served on the camp.

December 11— camp raided for the second time; the Four Sacred Trees are killed.

December 16— of the 23 people arrested, none take the plea offered by the court.

2000

January 27— the first of three groups arrested in the raid are tried and convicted; one defendant held in contempt of court for 2 days.

February 10— the second group is tried and convicted; charges from the November 16 arrests are dismissed.

March 2— the third group is tried and convicted; one defendant from the first group is sentenced to six months for contempt (refusal of the conviction sentence).

March 16— T-Rex's charges dismissed.

April 6— 6 month contempt sentence revoked.

August 10— two year anniversary at Minnehaha Park.

ized and there will be minimal protest from others who won't know us and won't have any reason to come to our defense.

Folks from the Minnehaha Free State saw a web of anarchist beliefs and action woven across and through the life of a real community. We learned from each other and demonstrated—actually lived—in a world without bosses, laws, and rules (save for everyone's favorite "No Drugs No Alcohol No Reroute" sign). These ideals in action did far more to advance anarchy in Minneapolis than any philosophical ranting ever could. At the Free State we found out, really, what is possible in this world, and in spite of it.



Carol and Al Kratz

THE CONTINUING APPEAL OF AUTHORITARIANISM

by Sarah Jane Smith

The Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation broke up in 1998. The Fire by Night Organizing Committee formed from the feuds that broke it up. This was the only formal organization that emerged directly from Love and Rage at that time, although it is not the only political direction that came out of its end.

Anarchist organizations in the US hold many theories about anarchism and revolution. Love and Rage was one piece of this in its eight year existence. The organization took seriously the development of a strategy for revolution. During this process, some members decided that some basic tenets of anarchism were untenable.

Fire by Night is not an anarchist organization, but in the statement announcing the break-up of Love and Rage and the formation of Fire by Night, founding members said that several of them were still anarchists and committed to anti-authoritarian and anti-statist strategies. In August 1999, however, Fire by Night published their *Points of Unity* in which they state that as an organization they "no longer believe that anarchism offers an adequate framework for answering the real problems that confront the revolutionary project."

Further explanation of Fire by Night's critiques of anarchism are in their pamphlet *After Winter Must Come Spring: a Self-Critical Evaluation of the Life and Death of the Love and Rage Revolutionary anarchist Federation*. According to Fire by Night's analysis, some major points of contention in the split were attitudes toward white supremacy, anti-statism, and anarchism's lack of theoretical development in terms of organizing and revolutionary strategy. In *After Winter*

Fire by Night states its intention to study revolutionary and radical movements in order to draw conclusions about the possibilities for revolution in the US. *Points of Unity* is the result of these studies.

As an organization containing many former anarchists, what did Fire by Night offer that could not be found in anarchist organizations?

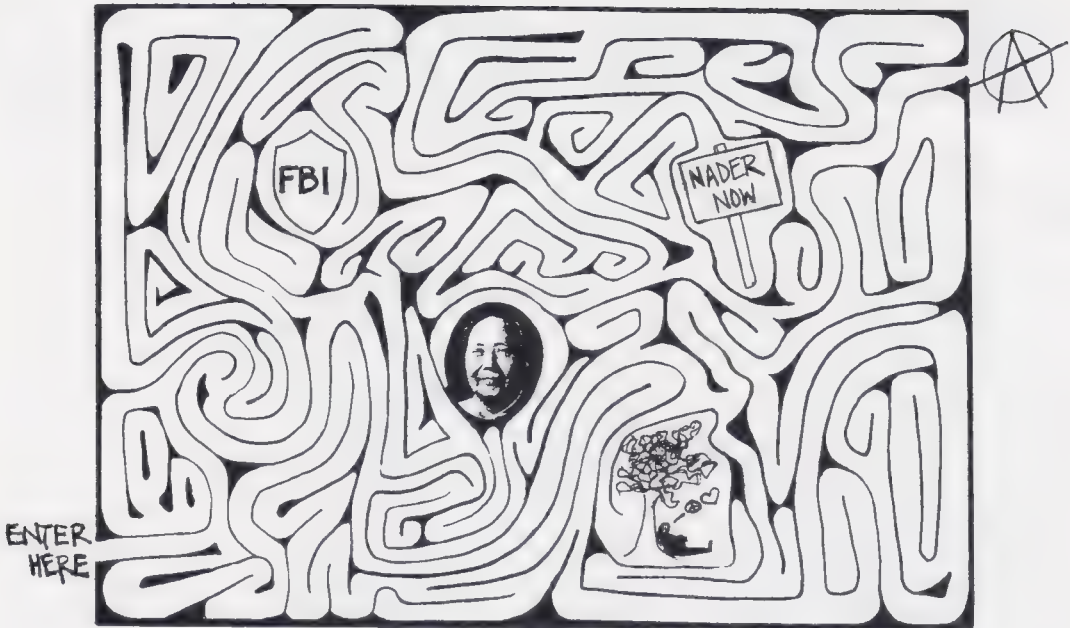
What They Have to Say

Many groups have complained that the anarchist movement is white, male-dominated, and largely middle class. In *After Winter*, Fire by Night cites this as a problem in Love and Rage and discusses their efforts to change this. Fire by Night sees lack of clarity and theoretical unity as the major culprit.

In *Points of Unity*, they put forward an analysis of the functioning of white supremacy in the US. Fire by Night makes clear that they view the struggle against white supremacy as primary in the struggle for revolutionary change. They do not discuss how they plan to put this into practice other than by "participating in mass struggles."

In *After Winter* Fire by Night cites Love and Rage's lack of clear analysis of white supremacy and white skin privilege and lack of an organizational strategy as the barrier to the development of a "genuinely multi-racial revolutionary anarchist organization." The "clear analysis" presented in *Points of Unity* would presumably clear up this blockage in their path. The examples in *After Winter* are concerning ideas printed in Love and Rage's newspaper. They do not include an in depth critique of Love and Rage's actions and have not proposed an organizational strategy or any clear course of action for making the work of the organiza-

Review
by night



Maze by Sarah Jane Smith

Review fire by night

tion anti-racist except that they will "support the liberation struggles of oppressed nationalities."

Anarchist organizations besides Love and Rage have shown emphasis on anti-racist issues in their work. At the time of Love and Rage's break-up another grouping within the organization put out a document entitled *Towards a Fresh Revolutionary Anarchist Group* which shows a similar emphasis and proposed that groups focus their work in Anti-Racist Action collectives as a means of putting that into practice. Some Anarchist Black Cross collectives have focused work on prisons and political prisoners based on an analysis of prisons as part of the machinery of institutionalized white supremacy. These specific projects and others can raise issues and questions about how one goes about challenging white supremacy and the effectiveness of various methods, but this is not unique to anarchism and is not addressed in *Points of Unity*.

Fire by Night's analysis in *Points of Unity* does not offer anything new. In *After Winter*, Fire by Night complains that anarchists of color were marginal-

ized in Love and Rage. They do not include those voices or any critiques in their analysis. We do not even hear about why they were marginalized. Fire by Night has chosen to leave behind real struggles and experience in favor of creating a new idealized theory.

The critique of white supremacy offers no plan of action other than removed "support." What Fire by Night seems to miss in its criticism is the power of action. Love and Rage, the Network of Anarchist Collectives, Anarchist Black Cross, and other anarchist organizations and organizing projects that anarchists have been involved in have led to concrete if unarticulated strategic developments towards building an anarchism that can defeat white supremacy. We need more mechanisms that can draw out and document the voices and ideas of these projects and organizers so we can build on them, not reject them if we do not see clear strategic intentions.

Not Anarchist Enough

Fire by Night diverges strongly from anarchist groups in how it proposes to change our current society into

one that can build freedom. In *After Winter*, Fire by Night complains of Love and Rage's and anarchism in general's lack of organizing method and theory. Fire by Night offers a debt to anarchism's "vision of radical participatory democracy," but how to make this real has become very different in their development of an organizing strategy.

There are themes in anarchist organizing efforts. In almost any anarchist mission statement/points of unity, primary elements are mutual aid, anti-statism and social self-organization. Mutual aid and communication among anarchists and as a means of putting out anarchist ideas are present in the mission statements of the Network of Anarchist Collectives and the Atlantic Anarchist Circle. Collectives or local groups are the main focus of political development and work. Organizing strategies and revolutionary goals are expected to develop within these collectives. Whether the strategies and goals actually get developed is another question, and anarchists could certainly stand to explore this further, pushing ourselves to document and build together working theories that are our own and that confront authoritarianism. Some attempts have been made such as NAC's *Dis/Connection* magazine, and the Community Organizing Core that developed out of the Active Resistance conference in 1996.

Fire by Night's alternative is to find the path to revolution "through direct participation in mass struggles...revolutionary theory must continuously be tested in practice and modified in the light of new experiences." In *After Winter* they say that their organizing strategy developed from a combination of what they call "the Zapatista theory of Mandar Obedeciendo or 'leading by obeying,' which shares much in common with Paolo Friere's ideas on pedagogy and the Maoist theory of Mass Line," although in their description it bears much more similarity to Mass Line theory than either of the others: Fire by Night states that "revolutionar-

ies should, in struggle with the people, draw out the revolutionary content in how they already understand their conditions.... Through the constant repetition of this process a more fully developed revolutionary consciousness emerges."

Mandar Obedeciendo is a principle that has long been used by Mayan communities. Leaders are elected to fulfill a role and if they do not obey that mandate they are immediately recallable by the communities. Friere's ideas on pedagogy do bear many similarities to Mao's Mass line, but he also includes concepts which critique the roles of leader and teacher. Many anarchists have also been inspired by the Zapatistas and Friere, but they have drawn different lessons than reinforcement of Maoist organizing strategies.

Fire by Night is presumably attempting to fill holes that are left by anarchism's "lack of method." The organizing theory that they put forward is not new or very well developed. The theory put forward in *After Winter* cites very few organizing concepts, none of which were developed in contexts similar to the US. *Points of Unity* repeats what Fire by Night sees as one of the failures of anarchism by not putting forward a developed method for revolutionary organizing or a defined strategy for developing one.

The Final Section

The most glaring and obvious differences between anarchists and Fire by Night emerge in the final section of *Points of Unity*, "Civil Society and the Revolutionary State." They critique the state, asserting that it is "above all else an instrument of class rule...(it is) alienated from and operates above civil society...(and) it makes self-preservation its highest priority," yet in the same section assert that in overthrowing the existing class rule we need to create a socialist state which can create a more egalitarian society. How this state will finally be done away with is through a second revolution which happens after the socialist

state somehow allows the "creation of a vibrant civil society of autonomous organization."

Fire by Night does not even attempt to deal with any of the challenges that anarchism poses to such theories in these points of unity. How the transition from bad state to good state to no state happens is not addressed except that each will be a violent revolution. Questions of developing critical consciousness and participation among "the masses" are not addressed except in the mention of needing a "vibrant civil society." There is only a vague description of how civil society will participate. In history, transitional governments established in communist revolutions have been no better than capitalist states. They have suppressed or controlled the rebellions and organizing efforts of civil society, rather than allowing it to become "vibrant." Fire by Night offers no explanation as to why the socialist state they imagine would be any different.

Although in *After Winter* they state an intention to "ruthlessly attack the flaws in all existing revolutionary theory and search for the ideas that can be used," they do not seem to have searched very far, or attacked very hard.

Work for Anarchists

I admire Fire by Night's stated goals of anti-sectarianism and working to develop a strategy that learns from past struggles and current realities. Yet they do not offer anything that is well developed or very new in *Points of Unity*.

In *After Winter*, Fire by Night packages eight years of experience into a neat analysis critiquing Love and Rage's and anarchism's lack of theoretical and strategic development. They have taken the path that many authoritarian communist parties have taken upon seizing state power—history has been retold through their eyes and to serve their purposes. The action and vitality of the anarchist movement disappears

when they attempt to remove the messiness of it. In dismissing anarchism, Fire by Night has also dismissed complex lessons and the thoughtful and innovative thinking and work that can be created by anti-authoritarian processes.

Issues of revolutionary strategy need to be addressed by anarchists, but I believe we can find anti-authoritarian answers. Fire by Night is right that we need to find ways to draw out these discussion in our work through collective process and struggle. Let's make sure that our discussions are deeper and more thoughtful than Fire by Night's.

Since the publication of *Points of Unity*, Fire by Night has disbanded to merge with the Freedom Road Socialist Organization. The Fire by Night *Points of Unity* pamphlet can be ordered from FBN 4096 Piedmont Ave. POB 237, Oakland CA 94611. Send \$2-3 along with your address.

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HOME & THE WORLD

CULTIVATING THE ANARCHIST SPACE



A Space, Philadelphia

by Robert Helms

Anarchist activism and culture flourishes when we arrive in a physical space and use it to secure our freedom or put our imaginations to use. There can be a world-altering occurrence in a space, large or small, whether in the

home, the local club, the workplace, or in any skyscraper or stadium on earth. Just as we begin each day by rising from bed and stepping into waking life again, we find ourselves in the world as anarchists, for the first time, at home. A few examples come to mind:

In 1636, Anne Hutchinson would open her home to her neighbors on Monday evenings to discuss the previous day's sermon at Boston Church. It became obvious to the religious patriarchy that this midwife, herbal healer and mother of thirteen children was both intellectually superior and more charismatic than any one of them. For demonstrating that she needed no governor to organize her civic life, and no minister to dictate her religious life, Anne's home meetings with her family, neighbors, and friends were suppressed, and she was imprisoned and then banished.

In the early twentieth Century, a radical rich lady named Mabel Dodge Luhan held parties she called her "evenings," at which artists, radical writers of every sort, and Wobblies would dream

and debate into the night. These evenings became known as one of the pre-eminent creative think-tanks of the age. Mabel's task was to open her home, invite a mixture of guests and get people to open up. Her home was used to defend workers' rights, to humanize the arts, to abandon cumbersome ways of thinking. Anyone might do what she did with her home: Hors d'oeuvres will be served at six.

Anarchists will typically offer up their homes both as a place to work on building anarchism and as a meeting place out of necessity. I remember my beginnings as in the movement, about ten years ago, when we could get all the anarchists in Philadelphia into one living room for coffee and an afternoon of lively discussion. There was no room at the old location of Wooden Shoe Books for any sort of event or meeting, so sometimes activities would be held in homes. Larger affairs had to be done in rented spaces. The ongoing space-shortage wore out the hospitality of the more active folks. A solution came in 1991, when we created the A Space Café in West Philly, in the neighborhood where many anarchists live. In the storefront of a collectivized building, we had direct control of the venue with minimal expenses.

At first, the A Space had the very same ambiance as a living room, and the calendar looked like a string of dinner invitations, such as "Rachel & Billy's Cafe." Members of the public were often

puzzled or turned off by this. Sometimes no friendly face was shown to outsiders, and the outreach function of the new place was long in developing. As the years passed, issues of clutter, sharing of space, and conduct have congealed into community understandings.

Cigar Workers

A workplace can become one's own by various methods. Complete and invasive unionization is only one approach. An enterprise can also be modified or confiscated by its employees.

The lectors, or "readers" hired by factory cigar rollers in the 19th century made work and educational entertainment happen together. Their radical lectures and recitals of anarchist literature served to train new speakers for careers in activism, it gave an educational aspect to the monotonous shop, and it spread ideas. This was a partial territorial gain which empowered some (mainly Spanish-speaking) tobacco workers.

Anarchist copy-shop staffers have sometimes arranged for their groups to take ownership of given store locations for a few graveyard shifts every week, transforming pointless drudgery into independent, worker-controlled publishing operations, lasting years at a time in one form or another.

This now-legendary opportunity, which has created a literary renaissance and

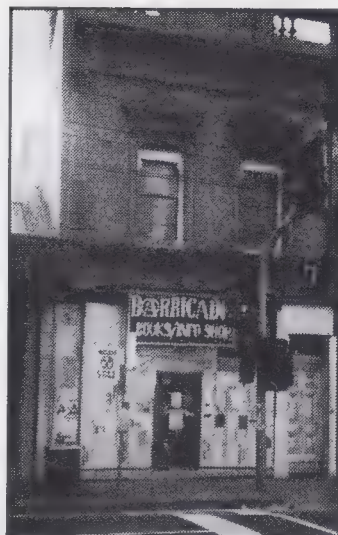
liberated political prisoners, can and should be repeated. Only an adjustment to new technology and the right placement of personnel is needed to make it happen again.

Defending Space

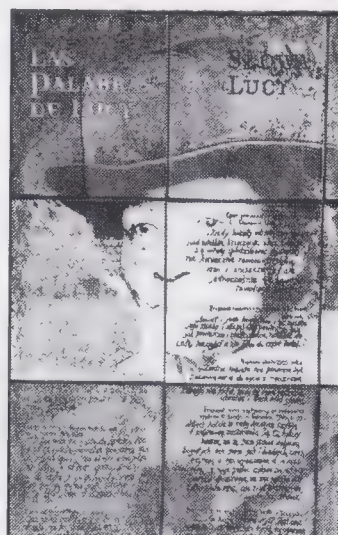
As the space in which one can be free expands beyond the home and into the workplace and public areas, we value that space more than ever before. I recall the summer of 1994, when members of the A Space collective had begun to take the café for granted, and we were all quite busy.

Collective meetings were having low turnouts or none, and critical decisions were left unmade. I happened to live upstairs in the building at the time, so I expressed concern with the dysfunctional ground floor. As an A Space member, I made strategic noises about how it might be better to close the place than see it fall apart and become a total embarrassment. I then made a flyer for the next monthly meeting, placing "the future of the space" on the agenda, along with some vaguely fatalistic language, and strong encouragement for attendance.

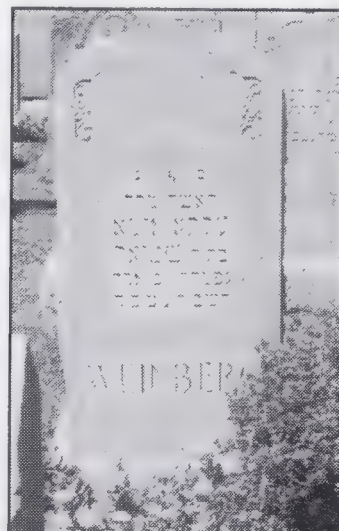
On the night of the meeting I was relieved to find a packed house when I arrived. I said little at the meeting except how happy I was to see so many faces, but a long agenda list was covered thoroughly, and when we quit, there was a renewed appreciation for the



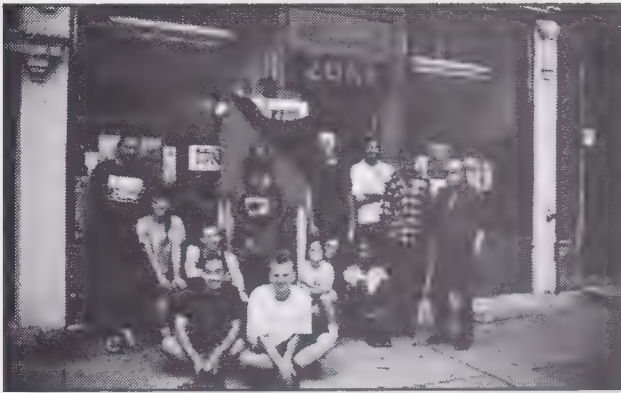
Barricade Books, Melbourne Australia



Lucy Parsons Memorial, Wicker Park, Chicago



Anarchist Chiam Wienberg's Grave



The Autonomous Zone, Chicago—August 1998



Anarchist Archives, Cambridge MA



Zine Forest, Active Resistance, Propaganda Gallery, Chicago 1996



Hindenburg, Sacramento CA

importance of this shared public venue and how much our operations had increased since we created it. There were jokes about "anarcho-imperialism," and how we should liberate everything between the Skuykill River and Cobb's Creek, which means all of West Philadelphia.

Exclusion & Expulsion

Because we feel the value of liberated space in our lives and continuously envision new uses for living spaces, workshops, and storefronts, we become jealous for every inch, but not in the primitive, territorial sense. Recent decades have seen some very lean years for the movement, and at times it has seemed like an "idiot magnet," with a number of cranks wearing out our patience and using our meetings as a weigh-station on the road to total friendlessness. In these past few years, however, the stakes of activism have risen and the anarchist population has grown and matured. We are steadily developing methods of exclusion in collectives, social clubs, and project committees. A recent decision implemented by a collective I belong to might serve as an example. One personality was trying the nerves of the most committed female members, and the collective was in danger of disintegration if the whole group should fail to deal with him effectively. We all put the matter at a high priority, compared notes and agreed to ostracize the offending party.

When our next regular meeting convened, and our former ally was to receive the decision, he remained uncooperative and refused to leave and turn over his key to the storefront. He had no

allies in the group, and we had laid a careful contingency plan against this. A nod got me started on changing the door locks, and there began an absolute silence which lasted for about two and a half hours. Mr. Difficult was expecting, or perhaps seeking a more physical scene, but the collective included some who firmly believe in a firm but non-violent approach. On this particular occasion it worked, and he finally left, with the clear instruction not to enter our space again. A few exclusions that were necessary in earlier years required the actual tossing-out of persons. In every case, consensus had been reached and the collective re-secured its quarters together. As a result, morale rose and the energy level remains high.

Reaching Out

There are, however, ways in which an anarchist space can exclude people who the collective wants to involve in its activities. This should be considered and avoided as much as possible. The surrounding neighborhood will be populated by a wide assortment of families with every variation in income, ethnicity, situation, and opinion. Unless there is communication between them and the anarchists, the meeting space will be viewed by the neighbors as an exclusive cul-de-sac for teenage punks or for people, good or bad, who have nothing to do with them.

A collective should try to include people who are new to the radical scene by personally inviting them to the more generic events, such as fund-raising dinners. Also, when there's someone nearby who happens to be an expert on a particular craft or subject, they can

be invited to share their knowledge at the anarchist space. I can assure you all that this can lead to amazing results.

We invited two translators of the great Norwegian anarchist Jens Bjørneboe to speak at the A Space once, and this was part of what got one of them (who is not an anarchist) motivated to resume this work and to publish more of the author's works in English.

There are two new titles on the shelf, going on three now: this is nothing to sneeze at, and it's the way you can reach out to anyone. If the lady who lives upstairs from you has an amazing coin collection, ask her to give a talk or a "show & tell" at your space, about the fascinating particulars of history that only coin freaks will know. If there's an old person who's been there since 1933, they can keep you spellbound for hours by describing the way the block looked in the old days, and what a cool old movie house stood where you now have a filthy McDonald's. If there's some person on your block who has worked for the sewer department for thirty years, call them up and learn all about it: your group might wind up claiming some underground turf in the bargain! There's no need to be shy about it. The worst they can do is decline your invitation, and they'll probably appreciate that you respect their experience.

We need to move on. We should shift our focus from filling abandoned space to marshaling our resources and carving out prime turf that we need and deserve. Searching the world for territory to liberate involves training the eye to spot not only the vacuum left in the ruins of Capitalism, but stepping forward into our visions as well.

Squatting has been completely mastered and examined by anarchists to the point where it would require a 1,000 page book to give an overview of the history of trends and practices seen during living memory. Everyone's either done it or been in squats if they've spent any time in this scene. The tales range from high drama to bawdy humor; from fatal fire traps to piss buckets. What is left to say about squats in the quaint old Victorian houses of West Philadelphia, or in the 500 year-old "Ex Fortes" on the outskirts of Rome, long abandoned by the Papal Army and connected to miles and miles of underground tunnels? Nothing new and different, since our opponents have galvanized themselves against squatters and made the practice extremely difficult almost everywhere.

Again there is the widespread perception that anarchism could expand exponentially if the space issue were successfully addressed. There are scores of theater production groups, and performances are very often hamstrung because they take place in living rooms, or are canceled for lack of any space at all. How can we obtain actual theaters? We need them, but too many anarchists would not appreciate that this should be prioritized. Anarchists should reclaim the heritage we share in the dramatic arts. In advance of the Republican National Convention last summer, a special play was written for the occasion: a plainclothes cop, teaming up with the party hacks, tries to frame the local anarchists for an assassination and thus catapult themselves to power. A defector from their ranks foils the plot after a crisis of conscience,

and the Republican Party is destroyed. It was a funny play, and there never was a better moment for it, but it was never to be performed, because too many of the actors were busy getting hog-tied and framed for real, and could not commit to all the time required for rehearsals. There were some problems in renting the intended site for the performance. If we can envision a theater for every anarchist town, and a dedicated troupe to populate its stage, rare cultural opportunities like this can be realized. I'll be the Monday morning quarterback who says that the play should have been prioritized along with the street demonstrations, since its impact on the public would have been far more powerful than if the same twenty people had strutted and chanted along every street in the city.

Expanding the @ Empire

What space cannot be liberated for the purpose of pursuing one's imagination? When it's a building in the neighborhood, sometimes it can be acquired by means of bidding at a public auction. In Philadelphia these are called "sheriff sales." Until around 1996, it was relatively easy to bid on dilapidated houses without competition from wealthy speculators. Squatter groups sought to become owners, sometimes leafletting the auctions and wearing stickers saying things like, "Please don't bid on 4826 Cedar Avenue. We live there and we want it." In a few instances, it worked! Even now, with higher land values changing the equation, anarchist groups still watch the public notices in the papers for nearby addresses. When a local "handyman special" appears,

they'll frantically raise cash and try their luck. Also, there will be occasions when the family home of an anarchist will be inherited or left idle for years, giving your group a chance to propose a use for the place. If the arrangement works out for everyone concerned, it may turn into a new frontier.

On the short term, even at the drop of a hat, we can always organize an anarchist picnic. A good place to do it is at the grave of an ancient comrade, off in a cemetery on the outskirts of town,

where you can take in the skyline and the fresh air with your pals, reciting old revolutionary poems and raising a toast to the dead. And don't wait till you get to illustrious boneyards like the Waldheim of Chicago or the Pere-Lachaise of Paris: there are probably some fascinating anarchists buried near you, waiting for your visit to mark the rebirth of the local movement. The soil is rich: go and cast your seeds



The Haymarket Memorial, Forest Home (Waldheim) Cemetery, Chicago
photo by Vic Speedwell

SUCCEEDED

For anarchy to succeed
or simply advance
towards its success,
it must be conceived
not only as a lighthouse
which illuminates and attracts
but as something
possible and attainable
in the real world.
We have relatively little
experience of anarchy in our
lives.
We have much concerned ourselves
with the ideal;
we have criticized
all the moral lies
and institutions which corrupt
and oppress humanity,
and have described,
with all the
eloquence and poetry
which we possess
a road for harmonious
existence, based on
the admission
that we have shown
very little concern
with the ways and means
for the achievement of our ideals.

Malatesta, 1924